

Conservative Misnomer

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“Conservative” describes various acts, beliefs, and philosophies, some contradictory. This essay focuses on misunderstandings and misuses of the word especially in the way it is applied to mythers¹ and right-wing politicians.

“Favoring the preservation of established customs, values, etc. and opposing innovation” is the first meaning of the word, according to the British Dictionary at dictionary.com, and it explains why mythers think it fits them.

Belief “gods” are real is an “established custom”—though deities and dogma vary culture to culture—and some might optimistically consider it a *value*, that is, as defined by dictionary.com: “A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.” But there is no evidence thinking supernatural entities exist has *any* benefits. Just the opposite is true as the steady stream of scandals involving nuns, preachers, priests, etc. makes clear.

conservative

adjective

- 1 favouring the preservation of established customs, values, etc. and opposing innovation
- 2 of, characteristic of, or relating to conservatism
- 3 tending to be moderate or cautious : *a conservative estimate*
- 4 conventional in style or type : *a conservative suit*
- 5 med (of treatment) designed to alleviate symptoms : Compare [radical](#) (def. 4)
- 6 physics a field of force, system, etc. in which the work done moving a body from one point to another is independent of the path taken between them : *electrostatic fields of force are conservative*

noun

- 7 a person who is reluctant to change or consider new ideas; conformist
- 8 a supporter or advocate of conservatism

British Dictionary definitions for conservative,
dictionary.com.

The word’s second meaning, “of, characteristic of, or relating to conservatism,” depends on what one thinks “conservative” means.

¹ Fundamentalists who believe myths are about real entities (e.g., Jesus) and events (e.g., immaculate conception).

Dictionary.com's third meaning, "Tending to be moderate or cautious," is the one that describes me and those I admire. "Moderate" means "keeping within reasonable or proper limits; not extreme, excessive, or intense," and cautious, "alertness and prudence in a hazardous situation; care; wariness."

The word's fourth meaning, "conventional in style or type" meshes well with its third. Five and six are technical, as the accompanying screen grab from dictionary.com shows, and used in medicine and physics.

Returning to the first meaning: Is it possible to think of anything more alien to our status as Earth's most intelligent species than "opposing innovation"? How could anyone think that's good? *Imagine*. If followed in earlier eras it would have ruled out telephony, flight, *anesthesia*, etc. Third-meaning conservatives, those who are "moderate or cautious," certainly have nothing against reasonable, scientifically supported progress.

That's part of the rub. The first and third meanings of the word are often at odds, practically *oxymoronic*.

Many established customs, values, etc. are "radical" as in dictionary.com's fourth definition of that word, "favoring, supporting, or representing extreme forms of *religious fundamentalism* [certainly a redundant phrase]." All belief myther dogma needs to be followed is extreme because proclamations recorded in books such as the bible are nothing more than ancient prejudicial and superstitious scrawls unimproved by centuries of ego-centric, naked-ape interpretation. Dogma is not reasonable, nothing about it is sacred, nothing moderate or cautious. It's just holding forth. Thinking it's true is not "tending to be moderate or cautious."

And it's not genius-level stuff. Even the Golden Rule, dogma at its best in Christianity, is rehashed common sense, and many cultures have generated it independently. *Of course people should do unto others as they would have them do unto them!* That's not heavy thinking. It's obvious, not deep. $E=mc^2$ is deep.

In our Enlightenment Era when people of different ethnic backgrounds, colors, sexes, sexual preferences, etc. are accommodated socially and legally as equals—for the most part—it's also radical, boorish to teach, for example, that homosexuals are sinful, "an abomination" in the "eyes of god" or "a woman's place is in the home." It's not "tending to be moderate and cautious."

It might be "traditional" because at one time, shamefully not long ago in the western world, women were second-class citizens, homosexual acts were illegal, and worst, people were bought, sold, and deployed like property. *Slavery was legal*. Such views and activities were not conservative according to meaning three, "tending to be moderate or cautious." And re-visiting the

first meaning of conservative, who would want to “preserve” them? Possibly some so-called “conservatives” who are actually radicals.

“Tending to be moderate or cautious” is exemplified by scientists, the ultimate conservatives. They proceed analytically and painstakingly, only accepting the truth of things based upon experimentation, observation, and evidence. As a final check, they must submit their findings and conclusions to excruciating peer review. That’s taking conservative to a heart-warming extreme.

The third meaning *never* describes politicians such as president tavern talk, who bragged on tape that he is such a big shot women don’t mind him grabbing their privates, or wild-eyed nuts like Jerry Falwell, Jr. and Paula White, mythers who believe a supernatural entity created the world by saying a few conjuring words and monitors *everything, everywhere* day-in-day-out. They are completely out of touch with reality and definitely not conservative. Tellingly, such mythers triumphantly proclaim the falsity of other belief systems. Why don’t they want to conserve *those* traditions? Because condemning the cherished myths of others is integral-traditional to *their* belief system: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” is Yahweh’s first commandment.

I no longer use the words “religion” and “theology” because they elevate what they describe to some higher, more ethereal level and make what is clearly mythology appear to be something different from and greater than that. Fundamentalist Christians have no compunction about calling the pantheons of Greek, Norse, Roman, etc. gods myths. Partly this is true because those belief systems don’t have followers in our times. Numbers add credibility, and probably they think those goddesses and gods—like all non-christian deities—are make-believe. But their goofy father-holy-ghost-jesus trinity has no basis in fact either. It’s just a matter of faith, which Mark Twain defined as, “...believing what you know ain't so.”

Adherents to the first meaning of “conservative” pick and choose what they want to conserve and it’s all a matter of sloppy, self-serving opinion.

Is that conservative? No. *Science is conservative*, and it doesn’t give credence to views shaped by *indoctrination* that myths, fables, etc. are about real entities and events.

Though I’m a firm believer in progress and not someone who wants to protect contemptible traditions such as mythism, racism, and sexism, I’m about as conservative as they come.

I’m frugal with money and never carry a balance on my credit card. My current automobile, an elegantly engineered and meticulously manufactured 2008 Hyundai Accent, is small, highly maneuverable, easy on gasoline. It’s practical, and I bought it used from a young man named Igor whose parents

immigrated from Serbia. I think it's the best car I've owned. Wife Pam likes to name her cars, so I call mine the *Sapphire Sipper*.

First meaning "conservatives" who wish to preserve "established customs, values, etc. and oppose innovation" like the third meaning—especially as it pertains to being tight with a buck.

In reality, such false conservatives often advocate spending huge amounts of money on causes that are not only lost but counter-productive, including the INSANE drug war, luring businesses to their states, or, most horrendously, *war*. A study published by Brown University in November, 2018, estimates that the United States has spent \$5.9 trillion (!) on war since the September 11, 2001 attacks and more than 700,000 have been killed.² What an astonishing waste! And what has changed? Many of our nation's battles are little more than a continuation of The Crusades. Christian versus Muslim. "Tending to be moderate or cautious"? No!

More mundanely, in Wisconsin, a supposedly "conservative" governor gave \$3 billion to a Chinese manufacturer.³ Not surprisingly this improvident, now ex-governor, is also a hard-core fundamentalist who thinks evolution, the massively supported explanation for the variety of life on Earth, is no more than on equal footing with "cretinism," the completely fanciful idea that a supernatural being created everything *magically*.⁴ All one trillion galaxies and everything in them!

That's not, "Tending to be moderate or cautious" and neither is transferring huge piles of public funds to billionaires.

In my city, Brookfield, a suburb of Milwaukee, the common council, with some "conservatives" aboard, approved a handout of \$10 million in taxpayer dollars to Milwaukee Tool, which is part of a conglomerate run by Horst Julius Pudwill, a Hong Kong resident worth \$2.9 billion.⁵ Not long after, \$10.7 million was given by the same council to a conglomerate that manages shopping malls, including Brookfield Square, and owns properties worth \$5.9 billion.⁶ Conservative? *No!* Outlandish. Prodigal.

Glendale, another Milwaukee suburb, is considering "providing" \$37 million to faltering Bayshore Mall which is owned by the notorious American International Group, Inc., a company with 56,400 employees, assets in the hundreds of billions, nearly \$50 billion in revenue, and a sordid past.⁷ Why

² <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>

³ <https://www.jsonline.com/story/opinion/columnists/emily-mills/2018/04/27/foxconn-gamble-government-giving-industrial-giant-too-much/555304002/>

⁴ <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/02/scott-walker-avoids-evolution-question-115117>

⁵ <https://www.forbes.com/profile/horst-julius-pudwill/#2d7fe4852274>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CBL_%26_Associates_Properties

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_International_Group

does *it* need financial assistance? Why not when it can squeeze it out of spendthrifts who only *think* they're conservative.

Bayshore Mall is managed for AIG by Cypress Equities whose CEO, Chris Maguire, admitted in 2008 to lying on his résumé about having a college degree from the University of Texas.⁸ Huh? Who does that? Is such an action, "Tending to be moderate or cautious." And he's still CEO 11 years later! Are CEOs conservative? Not necessarily.

Alms for corporations and their plutocrat owners are rationalized by claiming recipients "create jobs" and "pay big property taxes," etc. but I don't believe it; I especially don't think it leads to more *income* than outgo.

Anyway, aren't capitalists supposed to make it on their own? That's the *conservative* approach. I've run my businesses for decades with no government assistance. But then I'm *conservative*.

Finally, it's not "tending to be moderate and cautious" when individuals try to impose their morality on other people; that is, how people conduct themselves in the privacy of their own homes or what they do with their own bodies. This includes the right to choose birth control and for women to have abortions. It's not my business, it's not your business! It's a different matter once a child is born and becomes a person. But as a dependent mass of cells, only potentially one of us... No true conservative would say it is her or his concern.

Same is true of inebriants used in ways that don't endanger others. Chilling at home with marijuana-containing edibles, etc. is nobody's legitimate worry but the individual's so long as her or his intoxication doesn't harm anyone else. Participants in these activities might not be conservative but ignoring them until their actions affect the well-being of others is "Tending to be moderate or cautious."

Moral choices that some frown upon are worlds apart from actions universally considered crimes, such as assault, embezzlement, murder, rape, theft, and so on. These have perpetrators and victims and are completely different from victimless "crimes" such as drug use and prostitution. People everywhere stand against them. They aren't subject to debate. Conversely, all drugs and prostitution are legal somewhere.

I want the word conservative back because it fits me; I want it reclaimed from those who often are awarded its warm imprimatur, especially meaning three, "tending to be moderate and cautious," when they don't deserve it. Journalists and commentators go along with the misnomer and help spread misinformation about the true actions and thinking of mythers and right-wingers.

⁸ "Cypress CEO admits résumé was inflated," *Dallas Business Journal*, February 8, 2008.

Autocracy, fascism, racism, sexism, theocracy, etc. are not conservative. Wanting the freedom and liberty to impose your standards and views on others is not conservative. Thinking myths are about real entities and events is not conservative.

I'm conservative.

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